



## Why We Fail to Make the Right Impression (& What to Do)

*Why we sometimes fail to come across as we intend*

By Andrew Cooke, [Blue Sky GPS \(Growth & Profit Solutions\)](#)

We often want to make the 'right' impression, but inadvertently end up making the 'wrong' impression. This can happen with your boss, a potential employer, or someone who represents a romantic interest – in fact, anyone with whom you interact. This can happen despite our best efforts and having the best of intentions. Not coming across as you intend – particularly in your initial encounter with someone – can cause big problems in your personal and professional life. People may mistrust you, dislike you, or not even notice you. Sometimes the fault is your own, sometimes the reason why lie with other people

Why is this?

There are a number of reasons for this:

- *Perceiving people accurately is hard* – often the way we see one another can be irrational, incomplete, and inflexible and largely automatic. Although we can distinguish between strong emotions expressed by others, it is remarkably difficult to do with more differentiated emotions. How you or other people look when concerned, puzzled, anxious or confused is very difficult if not impossible to distinguish accurately. Because we know what we are feeling when we express it we assume that others can discern that feeling. Wrong! This is why we are often "misunderstood" when we believe we have been crystal clear.
- *What we say, do and express is subject to interpretation* – we cannot accurately assess others, or others accurately assess us, because we don't know what they are thinking or why. So our brains, automatically, pick an interpretation which reflects their beliefs and experiences. So they develop an immediate perception of you – rightly or wrongly.
- *We use shortcuts* – here we use heuristics and assumptions to fill in the gaps.



- *Heuristics* – these are rules of thumb which we use to help us guide our interpretation of someone, an event or a situation in making a decision. For example, when someone believes the opinion of a person of authority on a subject just because the individual is an authority figure. People apply this heuristic all the time in matters such as science, politics, and education. This can be described as an "authority heuristic".
- *Assumptions* – these guide what the perceiver sees, how that information is interpreted, and how it is remembered. As such, assumptions form an integral part of his or her perception of you. There are some assumptions so universal and automatic that you can count on other people making them about you, and that most people are unaware that are making them. For example, if you have a very positive trait — if you are smart, beautiful, funny, kind, and so forth — you are likely to have other positive traits. (and you can count on people to have no idea that they are doing it); the first impression you give is the “right” one, and it shapes how everything else about you is perceived; and you are like the other members of groups to which you appear to belong.

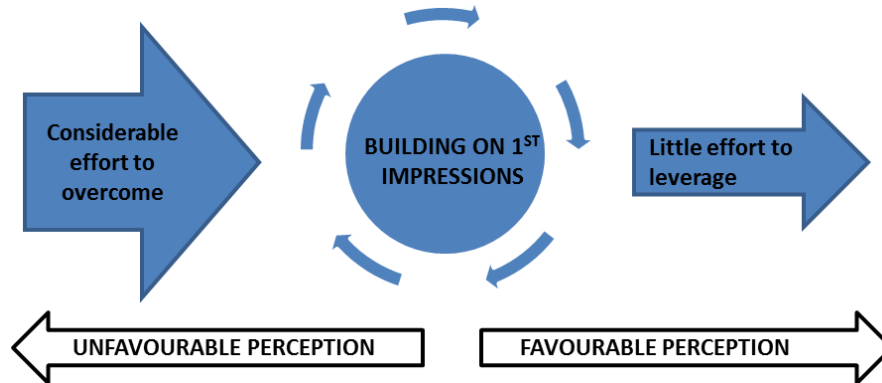
So even when you are meeting someone for the first time he or she will be filling in details about you - even before you start speaking! So what can you do about this?

- Find out in advance as much as you can about the other person’s likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses. This will help you to anticipate what he or she may be projecting onto you.
- Plan what you want to emphasize and/or underplay to help create the right effect.
- Use the primacy effect – this is where the initial information or points you make are more likely to be remembered than those later on. In short, your initial conversation and behaviour will have a greater and disproportionate impact than what occurs later.



- Make your opinions and values explicitly known in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the other person.

### **Making, Leveraging & Overcoming First Impressions**



Remember first impressions can always be changed and/or improved on. First impressions are important as they begin to lay the foundation of your relationship with another person, so if the foundation is not how you would like it to be then be quick to smooth over or repour the concrete before it sets. Why? Because this foundation also represents the inertia of the other person's attitudes towards you. If these attitudes are favourable then it can be used to generate momentum, if they are unfavourable then considerable effort is required to overcome the inertia and then gain momentum.

### **About Andrew Cooke and Blue Sky GPS (Growth & Profit Solutions)**

#### **Andrew Cooke**

*An experienced executive coach, business facilitator, and management consultant Andrew has more than 25 years' national and international experience, working across a range of industries and businesses. He is passionate in helping people, teams and companies to unlock their individual and collective potential, enabling them to achieve their personal and business goals and, in turn, to help them unlock the potential of others.*

*Andrew has extensive experience in dealing with both blue-chip and start-up companies, and has had extensive international experience in the UK, the Middle East and Ireland across a range of industries.*

*He has post-graduate business qualifications with a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the London Business School. He is an accredited associate coach for Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching in coaching executives and leaders.*



**Blue Sky GPS**  
Growth & Profit Solutions  
"Bringing people potential to life"

**Blue Sky GPS (Growth & Profit Solutions)**

Andrew runs [Blue Sky GPS \(Growth & Profit Solutions\)](#), working with individuals, teams, groups and corporate so they can unlock their potential, that of others, and create a life and a job they love and choose to lead.

*Through customized development programmes using experiential learning, backed by group workshops, individual one-to-one coaching and on-going support the individual and group development needs are addressed, the skills and capabilities are unlocked and the people can grow and achieve both personal and business outcomes on a sustainable basis. His blog, Growth and Profit, can be found at <http://growthandprofit.me>.*

To find out more about this visit the [Blue Sky GPS website](#) or contact Andrew at [andrew.cooke@business-gps.com.au](mailto:andrew.cooke@business-gps.com.au) or on +61 (0)401 842 673.



**Blue Sky GPS**  
Growth & Profit Solutions  
"Bringing people potential to life"

**Blue Sky GPS (Growth & Profit Solutions)**

Andrew runs [Blue Sky GPS \(Growth & Profit Solutions\)](#), working with individuals, teams, groups and corporate so they can unlock their potential, that of others, and create a life and a job they love and choose to lead.

*Through customized development programmes using experiential learning, backed by group workshops, individual one-to-one coaching and on-going support the individual and group development needs are addressed, the skills and capabilities are unlocked and the people can grow and achieve both personal and business outcomes on a sustainable basis. His blog, Growth and Profit, can be found at <http://growthandprofit.me>.*

To find out more about this visit the [Blue Sky GPS website](#) or contact Andrew at [andrew.cooke@business-gps.com.au](mailto:andrew.cooke@business-gps.com.au) or on +61 (0)401 842 673.